

AMENDMENT AND PRESENTATION OF CLAIMS

Please replace all prior claims in the present application with the following claims, in which no claims are canceled, withdrawn from consideration, or newly presented. Claims 2-5, 9-12, 16-19, 23-26, 30-33, and 37-40 are currently amended.

1. (Previously Presented) A method for providing an on-line billing system, the method comprising:

retrieving customer invoice information that includes an invoice due date and an invoice amount;

calculating a discount amount based upon the invoice amount;

displaying the calculated discount amount; and

selectively receiving a payment input that authorizes a payment according to the calculated discount amount in advance of the invoice due date.

2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the discount amount is valid for a pre-defined time period.

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 2, further comprising:

calculating an expiration date defining a the pre-defined time period; and

displaying the expiration date.

4. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein the discount amount is based upon a percentage of the invoice amount, further comprising:

calculating another discount amount based upon another percentage of the invoice amount, the ~~second~~ another discount amount being associated with another expiration date; and automatically applying either of the discount amounts based upon time of receipt of the payment input.

5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising: determining whether criteria for ~~early payment~~ receiving the discount amount are satisfied for a corresponding customer; and selectively applying the discount amount based upon the determining step.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 5, wherein the criteria in the determining step include maintaining a zero outstanding charge by the customer.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising: executing an electronic fund transfer in response to the step of selectively receiving the payment input.

8. (Previously Presented) A server apparatus for providing an on-line billing system, the server apparatus comprising:

a communication interface configured to retrieve customer invoice information that includes an invoice due date and an invoice amount; and

a processor coupled to the communication interface and configured to calculate a discount amount based upon the invoice amount, wherein the calculated discount amount is

displayed via a client, and a payment input that authorizes a payment according to the calculated discount amount in advance of the invoice due date is selectively received from the client.

9. (Currently Amended) The server apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the discount amount is valid for a pre-defined time period.

10. (Currently Amended) The server apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the processor is configured to calculate an expiration date defining the pre-defined time period, the expiration date being displayed via the client.

11. (Currently Amended) The server apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the discount amount is based upon a percentage of the invoice amount, the processor being configured to calculate another discount amount based upon another percentage of the invoice amount, the ~~second~~ another discount amount being associated with another expiration date, either of the discount amounts being automatically applied based upon time of receipt of the payment input.

12. (Currently Amended) The server apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the processor is configured to determine whether criteria for ~~early payment~~ receiving the discount amount are satisfied for a corresponding customer, and to selectively apply the discount amount based upon the determination.

13. (Original) The server apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the criteria include maintaining a zero outstanding charge by the customer.

14. (Original) The server apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the processor is configured to initiate an electronic fund transfer in response to receipt of the payment input.

15. (Previously Presented) An e-billing system comprising:
a database configured to store customer invoice information that includes an invoice due date and an invoice amount;

a server communicating with the database, the server being configured to retrieve the customer invoice information from the database, the server being configured to calculate a discount amount based upon the invoice amount; and

a client communicating with the server, the client being configured to display the discount amount, and to transmit a payment input that authorizes a payment according to the calculated discount amount to the server in advance of the invoice due date.

16. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 15, wherein the discount amount is valid for a pre-defined time period.

17. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 16 ~~45~~, wherein the server is configured to calculate an expiration date defining the pre-defined time period, the expiration date being displayed via the client.

18. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 17, wherein the discount amount is based upon a percentage of the invoice amount, the server being configured to calculate another discount amount based upon another percentage of the invoice amount, the

~~second~~ another discount amount being associated with another expiration date, either of the discount amounts being automatically applied based upon time of receipt of the payment input.

19. (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 15, wherein the server is configured to determine whether criteria for ~~early-payment~~ receiving the discount amount are satisfied for a corresponding customer, and to selectively apply the discount amount based upon the determination.

20. (Original) The system according to claim 19, wherein the criteria include maintaining a zero outstanding charge by the customer.

21. (Original) The system according to claim 15, wherein the server is configured to initiate an electronic fund transfer in response to receipt of the payment input.

22. (Previously Presented) A server apparatus for providing an on-line billing system, the server apparatus comprising:

means for retrieving customer invoice information that includes an invoice due date and an invoice amount;

means for calculating a discount amount based upon the invoice amount;

means for displaying the calculated discount amount; and

means for selectively receiving a payment input that authorizes a payment according to the calculated discount amount in advance of the invoice due date.

23. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the discount amount is valid for a pre-defined time period.

24. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim ~~23~~ 22, further comprising:

means for calculating an expiration date defining the pre-defined time period, wherein the displaying means displays the expiration date.

25. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the discount amount is based upon a percentage of the invoice amount, the apparatus further comprising:

means for calculating another discount amount based upon another percentage of the invoice amount, the ~~second~~ another discount amount being associated with another expiration date; and

means for automatically applying either of the discount amounts based upon time of receipt of the payment input.

26. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 22, further comprising:

means for determining whether criteria for ~~early payment~~ receiving the discount amount are satisfied for a corresponding customer; and

means for selectively applying the discount amount based upon the determination.

27. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein the criteria include maintaining a zero outstanding charge by the customer.

28. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 22, further comprising:
means for executing an electronic fund transfer in response to the receipt of the payment input.

29. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions for providing an on-line billing system, the one or more sequences of one or more instructions including instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the steps of:

retrieving customer invoice information that includes an invoice due date and an invoice amount;

calculating a discount amount based upon the invoice amount;

displaying the calculated discount amount; and

selectively receiving a payment input that authorizes a payment according to the calculated discount amount in advance of the invoice due date.

30. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium according to claim 29, wherein the discount amount is valid for a pre-defined time period.

31. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium according to claim 30 ~~29~~, wherein the one or more processors further perform the steps of:

calculating an expiration date defining the pre-defined time period; and

displaying the expiration date.

32. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the discount amount is based upon a percentage of the invoice amount, the one or more processors further performing the steps of:

calculating another discount amount based upon another percentage of the invoice amount, the ~~second~~ another discount amount being associated with another expiration date; and

automatically applying either of the discount amounts based upon time of receipt of the payment input.

33. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium according to claim 29, wherein the one or more processors further perform the steps of:

determining whether criteria for ~~early payment~~ receiving the discount amount are satisfied for a corresponding customer; and

selectively applying the discount amount based upon the determining step.

34. (Original) The computer-readable medium according to claim 33, wherein the criteria in the determining step include maintaining a zero outstanding charge by the customer.

35. (Original) The computer-readable medium according to claim 29, wherein the one or more processors further perform the step of:

executing an electronic fund transfer in response to the step of selectively receiving the payment input.

36. (Previously Presented) An early payment discount (EPD) program for an e-billing system including a computer system accessible for on-line interactive communication of invoices to users, said computer system comprising:

a database for storing customer invoice information, said information including an invoice due date and an invoice amount, said invoice information accessible to said customer for on-line interaction;

mechanism for calculating an early payment discount amount based on said invoice amount, and displaying for said user, said early payment discount amount and, a modified total invoice amount reflecting said early payment discount; and,

a mechanism for initiating electronic payment of said modified total invoice amount via said e-billing system, wherein said early payment discount is applied only upon payment within a pre-defined time period of said invoice due date.

37. (Currently Amended) The early payment discount program as claimed in Claim 36, wherein said applying mechanism includes a mechanism for calculating an expiration date defining said pre-defined time period and displaying said expiration date for said user.

38. (Currently Amended) The early payment discount program as claimed in Claim 37, wherein said early payment discount is a ~~first~~ pre-determined percentage of said total invoice amount, and applicable during between a the first pre-defined time period from said invoice date, said calculating mechanism automatically applying said ~~first~~ pre-determined percentage when said user accesses said invoice on-line within said ~~first~~ pre-defined time period.

39. (Currently Amended) The early payment discount program as claimed in Claim 38, wherein said early payment discount is ~~a-second~~ another pre-determined percentage of said total invoice amount, and applicable within ~~a-second~~ another pre-defined time period after said expiration date, said calculating mechanism automatically applying said ~~second~~ another pre-determined percentage when said user accesses said invoice on-line within said ~~second~~ another pre-defined time period.

40. (Currently Amended) The early payment discount program as claimed in Claim 39, further including a mechanism to enable scheduling of electronic payment by said user, said early payment discount including said ~~first~~ pre-determined percentage when said payment is scheduled within said ~~first~~ pre-defined time period, or early payment discount including said ~~second~~ another pre-determined percentage when said payment is scheduled within said ~~second~~ another pre-defined time period.

41. (Original) The early payment discount program as claimed in Claim 36, wherein a customer has associated EPD qualify criteria, said calculating mechanism applying said early payment discount amount when said user meets said qualify criteria.

42. (Previously Presented) The early payment discount program as claimed in Claim 41, wherein an EPD qualify criteria includes a customer maintaining a zero outstanding charge.